



THE LOST SHEEP:

A SERMON

PREACHED

ON THE FEAST OF ST. LUKE THE EVANGELIST,

AT THE

OPENING OF ST. PAUL'S CHURCH,

BRIGHTON.

BY

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A S E R M O N,

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ST. LUKE XV. 4.

“ What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it ? ”

WE are met together here to-day with a twofold intention ; the one, to keep the Feast of the Evangelist St. Luke ; the other to open, though without the solemnities of consecration, yet with the first offering of our prayers, and with the memorial of our Lord's love and passion, this stately and beautiful sanctuary. There is a manifold fitness in the concurrence of this work and day ; for the Evangelist whom we commemorate was the fast and faithful brother of the great Apostle whose name gives title to this church. While others forsook him in his toils and perils, Luke stood stedfast at his side ; while others fell away to the world, he held out unto the end. In his first bondage

St. Paul wrote, "Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you;" but six years afterwards, in his second imprisonment, he had need to change his voice and say, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world. Only Luke is with me." Blessed companions! in life united, in death inseparable; partakers of the Gospel and of life, of the cross and of the kingdom, and now, in heavenly bliss, they together follow their Master whithersoever He goeth, and their names float down to us upon the memory of the Church with the halo of saints and the crown of martyrdom. To-day we unite them again, as in life they loved to be.

But there is another fitness which I may not fail to note. St. Luke has ever had a name for skill in human science. In the world he was known for arts which grace our nature with culture and refinement. With his memory has ever been associated the sacredness of Christian art, the purity and the sanctity of conceptions and ideas of beauty. Therefore not without fitness is to-day chosen as the festival on which to open this beautiful church,—a structure conceived and framed by an eye and a hand of no common skill. The Church of Christ has, indeed, received no pattern in the Mount; there are no revealed, and therefore necessary forms in which we build.

What need have we of forms and patterns, to whom has been given the Spirit of worship, to whom has been vouchsafed the Spirit of love, devotion, adoration;—on whom the great gift of these latter days, the presence of the Holy Ghost, the abiding mystery of Pentecost, has been bestowed? To us is given more than a pattern in the Mount; an implanted principle of worship, that same principle of love which ministered to our Master in His necessities on earth, which brought ointment for His feet, fine linen and spices for His burial. That same Spirit dwells in us, and with it also the divine idea of worship. In the temples we build, we enshrine the Presence of Him who said, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” We set forth the Majesty of that Lord who, though in heaven, is here; who, though He be on high with God, yet for ever dwells in healing and in mercy among men; we rear the shrine of His invisible presence, the precincts of His miracles of grace. The Spirit of grateful joy teaches us to offer of our substance, and to build for His Name as worthily as we may,—worthily, not by the measure of His Majesty, but by the measure of our great infirmities. I am bid this day to ask you to give of your alms for the perfecting of this work. Make, then, your offerings according to

your substance, with a glad heart, and on your knees. Offer to Him in the spirit of love and worship ; and our gathered oblations will be laid before Him on His altar, with prayers and intercession for His sheep, “ scattered abroad in this naughty world, that they may be saved through Him for ever.” To your faith and gratitude, to your love and reverence for that one Lord, through whose blood alone we look for everlasting life, I commend this work.

There is yet one more point I would also notice. St. Luke was master not only of the more graceful sciences of our nature ; he had skill also in healing the body, a calling which foreshadowed the higher ministry of mercy which his Lord had prepared for him. His skill in healing the body was transfigured into a gift of healing the soul. He became a physician of souls, a sharer in the ministry of his Master ; and we find in his Gospel that there is a special record of two great classes of facts. First, the miracles of healing wrought by our Lord. These seem to have struck with peculiar force on a mind already awakened by his previous studies ; and for this reason he seems to have gathered up every fragment of our Lord’s miraculous cures. And the other careful record is of those parables in which our Lord specially manifested the healing of lost souls ; the para-

bles of great grace to penitent sinners, such as the Prodigal Son ; and that which we have taken to-day, the Parable of the Lost Sheep: "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?" A blessed and beautiful vision ! The Shepherd in the wilderness seeking his sheep that is lost ! How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him that seeketh the lost, bringing glad tidings of good ! And who is this in the wilderness seeking for the lost, but He whose tokens are the nails and the crown of thorns ! What is this but a vision of His own ministry of love—a parable of "the Son of Man coming to save that which is lost." "And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing ; and when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me ; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." That is to say, so great is the care of the Son of God, that He will leave all His faithful servants to seek one sinner that is gone astray ; so great is His tender love, that over one soul—once lost, now found again—there shall be greater joy in

heaven than over ninety and nine righteous who stood stedfast in His kingdom.

How shall we understand this parable of love and care ? It does not mean that He loves the ninety and nine less, but that one lost soul needs His compassion more. There are deep and divine reasons for this especial mercy. Let us see, as far as we may, what they are. And may the Holy Spirit of God, by whom alone our hearts are cleansed to look into these depths, by whom alone the light of truth becomes to us the power of Eternal Life, teach us to understand this mystery of the kingdom of grace.

We see, then, first of all, that He left the hosts of heaven to find man who was lost. There is an eternal fold, a fold on high, in which are gathered all pure and spotless spirits. These He left when He came to seek us on earth. In the beginning, God dwelt alone in His own Eternity, the Father beholding His own Image in the Son, the Father and the Son united in the Holy Ghost ; the Blessed Three, the Holy One, all-sufficing in His own eternal bliss. Moved by love, God created the heavenly hosts. He surrounded Himself with orders and hierarchies of ministering spirits, cherubim and seraphim, principalities and powers, angels and archangels ; a heavenly court, in the midst of which He reared His "throne high and

lifted up." Then, still moved by love, He created man upon the earth in His own image and in His own likeness. By sin, man fell from the harmony of God's kingdom. When man fell, he was lost from the order of eternal life. The Son of God then left His elect Angels in the eternal fold. He came down upon earth, was made Man, dwelt among men, seeking out the lost; He suffered on the Cross, went down into the grave, followed onward even through the valley of the shadow of death after His sheep that were "scattered in the dark and cloudy day." Not that He loved those spotless spirits less, but because lost man needed His seeking more.

And so, again, following the same law of love, He seems to leave the faithful, that He may seek for sinners. As there is a fold in heaven, so there is a fold on earth, a visible fold,—the Church, in which He gathers His lost sheep. There is, besides, within that visible fold, another fold unseen, His own encircling Presence, the circuit of His own watchful care, within which the faithful and obedient are securely sheltered. These are they who walk steadfast in baptismal purity. They keep close to the eye and to the pathway of their Lord, going in and out by the gates of obedience. These are the ninety and nine who keep close to the feet of the Good Shepherd. For a while He passes

them by, that He may seek sinners who, after baptism, fall from grace. For many are they who go out of this inward fold. They go out into ways of this world, the tangled mazes of this wilderness, losing themselves by losing sight of Him ; and, by losing sight of Him, losing their own souls. What is this wilderness but sin ? Every several sin that man commits is a wilderness to that man's soul, whether it be a sin of the flesh, as lust, gluttony, excess, or a sin of the spirit, as inward impurity, pride, anger, hardness of heart, sloth, or falsehood,—whatever it be, that sin is a wilderness in each man's soul, in which he is lost. For sin raises a cloud between the soul and the gaze of the Good Shepherd ; it blinds the heart, and hides the Good Shepherd's face. The sinner loses the eye which guides him ; he loses the light of that countenance which shone upon the track of life. His will breaks away from the will of our Divine Guide, by which will he was sanctified ; for so long as His will and our will are united, we are drawn by a thread of gold, which leads us in the way of life ; but when, by sin, we start back and snap asunder that guiding clue, we are straightway lost. Such is the state of sinners who, after baptism, turn from Him. Once lost, they wander from the fold, ever going more astray, outcast and estranged, without God in the world. It may be

in a gross and reckless life ; it may be in the more subtil sins of the spirit. Men eagerly condemn grosser sensualities ; but they forget that spiritual sins are characteristically Satanic : for what is Satan but an angel ? and the sins of angels are not of the flesh, but of the spirit. These finer sins often dwell with the mightiest mastery in souls which are pure from grosser spots of the flesh. A man may be altogether lost from God through the mere power of sloth. A soul drowned in forgetfulness of God is as truly a lost soul as one that wallows in impurity. If his spirit is severed from the spirit of the Good Shepherd, if he is living without prayer, repentance, self-examination, that soul is as truly a lost sheep as if he were living in stubborn pride, professing openly the infidelity which he truly practises. After such a one the Good Shepherd comes forth, leaving the ninety and nine, as He left the heavenly host. And how leaving them ? Omnipresence cannot depart from place to place. When we say He leaves, we do not mean that He ceases there to be. The Son of God, when He came down from heaven to earth, did not forsake His heavenly court. Omnipresence cannot go hither and thither. He came by the intensity of His love, by the personal manifestation of His incarnate Person, by the presence of His visible manhood. Abiding ever in His heavenly court, He

came, breathing all the compassion, power, and sympathy of God into every penitent soul. And in like manner, in His fold on earth, He does not forsake His faithful followers ; He does not so much as turn His eye from those who keep close beside Him ; He does not withdraw from them any ministry of care ; for omnipresence cannot, and infinite love will not, depart from any faithful soul. But He comes with a manifold tenderness of pity, opening His ear to the cry of those who are gone astray. He listens, as if no other prayer were offered throughout all the earth ; He bends His eye upon the lost sheep, as if there were no other wanderer, concentrating the fulness of His divine gaze upon that single soul. As in the light that is about us every particle has the full, perfect nature of light, withdrawing nothing from the splendour of the sky, so the Divine love, forsaking none in heaven, on earth turns all its intensity on one lost soul. This is the plain meaning of our Saviour's words. Let us see what are the reasons of this Divine procedure.

1. The first is, because one lost soul is infinitely precious. It is the creature of infinite love. " In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth ;" He parted the light from the darkness, and the waters from the dry land ; " He made great lights, the sun to rule the day, and the moon

to rule the night ; He made the stars also ;" He peopled both the earth and the sea with life ; but in the end of creation, in the sixth day, when love had wrought all its less perfect works, it wrought its most perfect work of all : God said, " Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." He gave to him a share in His infinite intelligence, He endowed Him with a particle of His infinite love. Intelligence and love kindled in man an image of that deepest mystery which is in God,—a personal will. The will that is in each several man is the divinest gift of God's creation. The firmament above our head, the earth beneath our feet,—these are nothing compared with one will, kindled from the will Divine.

Again, every several soul has a capacity of infinite weal or woe. There is in it a capacity of heaven or of hell ; of eternal life or of eternal death ; of the beatific vision of God's Face, or of the outer darkness in which the Vision which makes blessed is lost ; the loss of which is agony. I say infinite, not in extent ; for God alone is infinite in His immensity ; but infinite in the intensity of its powers of sense ; so that the soul of man, finite and limited, is capable of eternity, of an immeasurable sense of joy or woe, a boundless sense of misery or bliss.

Moreover, every several soul has been pur-

chased by an infinite price. The measure of the worth of that one soul is nothing less than the Divine blood of the Son of God. We measure things by the price at which they are redeemed. At what worth, then, shall we measure one redeemed soul? He who became incarnate; He who, being incarnate, suffered upon the cross, He knows the price of one lost sheep. He alone who knows the worth of His own eternal sacrifice, knows also the worth of one perishing soul. This is one reason.

2. Let us take another. It is because one soul, gone astray, is in greater danger than the rest. It has fallen, first from creation, and then from redemption. It has fallen from its Divine acceptance, both in the first Adam and in the Second. It is "twice dead." "The last state of that man is worse than the first." "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin."¹ "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance."² There is no second "baptism for the remission of sins." That one lost soul is in the way which leads beyond the boun-

¹ Heb. x. 26.

² Heb. vi. 4-6.

daries of grace. Every day brings it nearer to the fatal brink. Dangers are ever thickening ; temptation waxing mightier ; sins are hourly multiplied ; the die is daily blacker ; life is fast wearing away, eternity fast coming on ; therefore the Good Shepherd speeds apace with a hasty step, to find that one sheep which is lost. As a father or a mother, if, among many children, one fall sick and is in peril of death, passes by all the rest ; not that they love them less, but that the other needs them more. For a while they seem to blot them from the memory, they set them all aside, they hang day by day and night by night over the pallet of the sick child ; day and night they stand watchful, unwearied, by the sufferer ; they have no eye, no ear for any other. The sick is as an only child. And when the child of their fears shall be raised to health again, they have a peculiar tenderness towards that one recovered life, for whom they so greatly sorrowed. “ This my son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found.” So is it with the Good Shepherd. Over those who are lost He yearns with especial tokens of His Divine tenderness,—a mystery of love we cannot penetrate. To David, a seer was sent to say, “ Thou art the man.” To Saul, on his way to Damascus, a vision from heaven was revealed, which smote him down in penitence. Who was it washed the

feet of Jesus with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head? Who was admitted to this closest fellowship? From whom was accepted this token of love? To whom did He shew Himself first after His resurrection? To her who was "a sinner," out of whom He had cast seven devils.

3. And once more. The love of Christ is specially shewn to sinners, because in the saving of one lost soul there is a greater revelation of God's grace. God reveals His power in holy Angels; He reveals His love in the perfection of the Saints; He reveals His pity in the fellowship of Penitents. But He reveals power, love, and pity sevenfold, sixtyfold, a hundredfold, in the recovery of the lost, in gathering together sinners ready to perish, in seeking those that are gone astray until He find them. Every step of departure draws forth a further measure of grace. There is, as we read in the Gospel, an ascending scale in the miracles of the Son of God. The daughter of Jairus lay dead in her chamber, on the threshold of early life. He came and took her by the hand, and raised her from death: a type of those who early in life fall into deadly sin, but before they become habitual sinners are again quickened to life by the touch of His grace. This is a sample of early conversion after early falls.

Again, we read of the widow's son, who was

both dead and carried out to burial. The Son of God met him, and, at the very gate of the city, raised him to life again. A type of those who, falling into deadly sins, and those sins becoming habitual, not only die to all love and fear, but to all memory and thought of Him and of themselves. They are carried, as it were, stretched on the bier by a course of sinning. They are borne forth from their home, and are met at the very gates of the grave; and by the word of the Son of God are raised again to repentance. An example of conversion in middle life.

But further still, we read of one who was not only dead and carried forth, but four days buried in the grave, bound with grave-clothes, his eyes blindfold, his head wound about with the bandage of corruption, lying in the grave, sealed up as if for ever. So is it with the sinner, who, living stubbornly in sins, known to be sins, is at last swathed in the winding-sheet of some lust, some secret impurity, some close deceitfulness, some filthy passion. Even in the sight of holy angels he lies dead. Nothing but the quickening of the Spirit of life from the hand of the Creator can again raise him to life. Then cometh the Son, to whom the Father hath given both to have life in Himself, and to quicken whom He will. He rolls away the stone from the mouth of the grave, un-

binds the winding-sheet, sets loose the soul from its habitual corruptions, bringing it back again to life and to repentance. A type of conversion, perilous, and all but hopeless, as life wears onward to its end. The greater the need, the greater the grace. The more deeply sunk in spiritual death, the more the grace of God is manifested in the raising of a sinner to newness of life. "This sickness was not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby."¹ For let us not so misconceive the wisdom and power of God as to imagine that the redemption is a remedy tardily brought in to heal some inevitable wound. Do we believe that God made the world sinless, and that afterwards one mightier than He came upon Him, spoiled Him of His Omnipotence, and marred His perfect work, contradicting His almighty will? Is this our belief? He who made the world, both permitted the fall and predestined the redemption. There is a scale of ascent in the works of God, going from strength to strength, and from glory to glory, unto the perfection of eternal bliss. Mystery of mysteries, into which no eye or thought of man can enter. The first Adam was united with God by the Spirit; the second Adam *is* God. Man is now united with God as man was never united before. The

¹ St. John xi. 4.

union of the first man with God, even when perfect in God's image,—what is this to the union of the Godhead and the Manhood in the Incarnate Word? And of that Word are we partakers; so that St. Peter writes: We are made “partakers of the Divine nature.”¹ And this is no special gift of glory reserved for the greatest and chief among His Saints, but for all; for sinners and for penitents, for the least and lowest, once soiled, now cleansed by partaking of the “Word made flesh:” thus all are lifted from transgression into a height of glory never before revealed. Creation had nothing to equal it. Redemption makes creation perfect, unfolding the grace of God, exalting the destiny of man.

And now, further than this it is not for us to penetrate, lest we break through the lines whereby the Divine wisdom has bounded about our limited intelligence. Let us, then, from this gather two great pledges for our personal salvation, and then make an end. 9

1. This shews us, first of all, how hardly shall any sinner be lost. I do not say that no sinner shall be lost. God forbid! “Many are called, and few chosen.” Of the ten virgins bidden to the marriage-feast, five were shut out. Our Lord says, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I

¹ 2 St. Peter i. 4.

say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Many shall come and say, Lord, "we have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets." "Have we not prophesied in Thy name; and in Thy name have cast out devils; and in Thy name done many wonderful works?" And He shall say, "I never knew you."¹ I do not say that no sinner shall be lost; but how hardly will God give up a sinner! How contrary to His will! What a force (to speak as a man) must He needs put on His tender love! What a contradiction of His purposes of mercy! "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" It is hard indeed, on our part, to enter into life; but on the part of God's mercy, it is hard to give up a sinner. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" "'All souls are mine;' mine by creation, for I made them; mine by redemption, for I purchased them; mine by adoption, for I have made them to be my children. How shall I give thee up, for thou art my work and likeness, my servant, and my son!" Therefore, when we forsake Him, He follows us. He follows us by pleadings of His Spirit, by promises of love, by gentle drawings,

¹ St. Luke xiii. 24, 26; St. Matt. vii. 22, 23.

by threats of exceeding terror, by warnings of His wrath, by gifts from His mercy, by showers of His grace, by rods laid on in chastisement, by any thing and by all things, if so be that the lost soul may be found again. And when we rebel against the light within us, He pours it all around. He comes and visits us. He sheds abroad upon us the light of His personal presence, making our soul to stand out in a relief we never saw before; faults rise up into the magnitude of sins, sins grow dark with an incredible blackness, and the light which falls around us and within, makes us to see ourselves, for the first time, as we truly are: so that we awake up and say, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not!" Even our own chamber, our own familiar home, is full of God, of a Presence that may be felt. "How dreadful is this place!"¹ "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."² And so, again, when any soul falls into the pit and the brakes of the wilderness, when it becomes entangled and wound about by briers and thorns of this evil world, then He comes forth with some searching chastisement, with some lingering sickness, some wearing perpetual fear, some continual daily anxiety, some slow fire of

¹ Gen. xxviii. 16.

² Job xlii. 5, 6.

spiritual pain, which pierces us through and through,—with some such visitation He finds, and sets us free, stooping down over us, unwinding, disentangling first one and then another bond of sin, loosing us from habit after habit, from fault after fault, from the world, from Satan, and from ourselves, turning our feet again towards the unseen fold. So He has followed us through life. Has it not been so with you? Are there none here who, after a life of sin, have been awakened on a bed of sickness, or, after a life of irreligion, have been made to repent by the visitation of a sorrow? What are these but the hand of the Good Shepherd finding you at last? But if we will not be saved, we must indeed be lost; for the will in man is the gift of God. The will of man is divine in its nature; the human will has a share of divinity; it partakes the nature of its original. Next to omnipotence, the will of man is almighty. A rebellious will has none mightier but God alone; and yet God will not overbear that will. God made man free, and He respects the work of His own hands. There is no forced love in heaven. All hate in hell is free. We were made free, and freely shall we be saved or lost. All love Divine will never save a soul that will not be saved. All the grace of creation, redemption, regeneration, the word, the Spirit, the holy sacraments, the divine

providence of God, all are spent in vain upon the soul that will not be redeemed. "Though Coniah, the son of Jehoiakim, were the signet upon My right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence."¹

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die." But that is not God giving man up. It is that man will not be saved. It is not the will of God that one of the redeemed should perish; He loves us too well. It is not His will that the Cross should be spoiled of one soul. We cost Him too much. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost will our salvation; all holy spirits bend over us, and yearn to receive us into bliss; there is joy among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. As in the old creation, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy;" so much more a thousandfold over the new creation of God, angels and archangels, all the companies of heaven, praise and glorify the Father who gave His Son, the Son who gave Himself, the Spirit who sanctifieth his elect, over one lost soul gathered from this perishing world, into the kingdom of eternal life.

2. The other truth we may learn from this is, how surely shall every true penitent be saved. No true penitent can perish. But perhaps you may say, "I believe this for others; I cannot believe

¹ Jer. xxii. 24.

it for myself. My doubt is, not whether God will save me, if I am a true penitent; my doubt is, whether I be a true penitent." Perhaps there may be some of you who may say, "I have wandered too far; my sins are too many; my offences are too great; I have strayed too far from God." By what do you measure this distance? Do you measure it by the Cross? Is it by the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of the Passion of Christ? If so, what is too far? Is it by the love that "passeth knowledge?" If so, who has wandered too wide astray? Do you desire to return? If so, who awakened in you that desire? And what does that awakening prove? When the prodigal "came to himself," his face was already turned to his father's home. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin."¹ Honour that blood. Stint not its almighty power. No sins are too many, no sins too great, for the true penitent. But perhaps you say, "I have been lost too long; my sins are too inveterate and stubborn: they are wound about me like a sevenfold chain." Are they a burden to you, or no? Are they sweet to you, or no? If they are a burden, who made them now press so weightily, which once were so little heeded? If they are bitter to you, who made them taste to you bitter now, which

¹ 1 St. John i. 7.

tasted once so sweet ? Who has been busy about you, creating those new thoughts in your heart ? “ This change is from the right hand of the Most High.” He is loosing you from those sins which He makes your burden and bitterness. Though self, and insincerity, and the world cling fast about you as the briars in the wilderness, He will surely set you free. Perhaps, then, you may say, “ How can I think He has found me ?” Brethren, do you desire to find Him ? You will say, “ Yes, I do.” Then we seek Him because He first sought us. When there is in any soul a desire to seek the Good Shepherd, it is a divine proof that the Good Shepherd has already sought that sheep. Do you say, “ But though I be found, how shall I ever persevere and hold out to the end, infirm and wavering as I am, weak and inconstant, resolving, and breaking my resolution ; purposing, and failing ; sinning, and repenting ; repenting, and sinning again : how shall I hold out to the last ?” “ When He hath found it, He layeth it on His shoulders ;” He will give you strength. He will inspire you with His will ; He will take your sinful will, and lay it on His holy will ; your weak will, on His mighty will ; your wavering will, on His changeless will ; your human will, on His divine will : He will “ carry you in His bosom ;” “ and no man shall pluck you out of His hand.”

“And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying, Rejoice with me.” Therefore, beloved brethren, be of full hope. Come with faith; come to Him in the holy Sacrament of His Body and Blood; come and seek Him now who hath been all your life long seeking you. Let this be the day of your return. Come as if you never came before.

“I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”¹ Come to Him in this mystery of His love and presence, and He will receive you. Come with a special intention to-day. Come with a prayer for the Pastor who shall fold his flock in this sanctuary. Ask for him a true shepherd’s heart, a watchful eye to know his own sheep and to call them each by name; an ear to hear them, a voice, that they may hear him again. Pray that he may have grace to put them forth and lead them, that they may go in and out, and find the true pastures of life eternal. Pray for the flock, that none may stray, but abide stedfast within the fold; and pray too for those who may be lost, that in childhood, or youth, or manhood, or in the decline of life, they may be found at last, and carried home in safety and with joy to the eternal fold. Pray at the altar now for some one lost sheep; first

¹ St. John x. 9.

of all for your own soul, each one ; then for some other, that the Good Shepherd may bring him back to everlasting life. Oh, what a gathering on the eternal hills, where every one shall be spotless as the driven snow, pure as the Lamb without blemish ! What joy in God, what joy in each other's joy ! Every soul in that day a miracle of grace, redeeming, sanctifying, restoring, cleansing sevenfold, tenfold, a hundredfold, to each according to the measure of his necessity. And oh, what a history shall then be revealed to every soul ! What a history of the Good Shepherd's care ! Pit-falls, then first seen, never suspected here on earth ; snares, entanglements, dangers, hair-breadth escapes of life, years of hovering upon the very brink of eternal death ; — all this revealed for the first time, when all peril is for ever passed, and every soul is safe in the kingdom of the Father. O bliss, which not even seers or prophets can conceive. Not one lost of all that hundred and forty-four thousand, that divine parable of numbers, mysterious and innumerable. Not one sheep lost when the flock shall pass under the pierced “hand of Him that telleth them ;” and yet, of all that mighty flock, not one that was not lost once ; not one that shall not then be found for ever.

